

On the Beat

Minneapolis VA
Health Care System
April 2014



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Albert Lea CBOC Opens
- Top Award for Dr. Wilt
- Civil Servants of the Year
- VA Newsmakers
- VA2K Date Set
- Milestones
- News from VACO



"On the Beat" is published monthly for patients, employees, volunteers and friends of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.

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The Minneapolis VA's newest Community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) opened April 2 in Albert Lea, MN. More than 30 patients, including walk-ins, were seen on the first day. The CBOC is operated under a contract with Valor/Humana of Louisville, KY. The new clinic offers primary care, mental health counseling, imaging services and podiatry. The grand opening is April 25 at 1 pm. The public is invited.



ON THE COVER - On April 8, patients from the Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Unit and SCI/D Center practiced community skills at a Timberwolves game. As part of on-going education for both patients and their families, therapeutic community integration opportunities are an integral part of the interdisciplinary treatment approach. Skills such as street safety, scanning, problem-solving, route planning, public transit use, socialization, balance, and endurance are functional objectives assessed by recreation and creative arts therapists. The group watched the game from the suite of Log House Foods. Pictured, Front (l-r): Jake Jacobson and Don Westberg; Back (l-r): Thai Lee, Rec therapy intern Cayla Penn, John Flanagan, rec therapist Missy Wendt, John O'Brien and Lucky Lor.

RESEARCH NEWS



Tim Wilt, MD

Physician Dr. Tim Wilt Receives VA's Top Health Services Research Award for 2014

Timothy J. Wilt, M.D., M.P.H., is the recipient of the 2014 VA Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research—the highest honor for a VA health services researcher. Dr. Wilt is a staff physician at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System and professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School; he's also a core investigator with Minneapolis VA's Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research (CCDOR).

Wilt, author of more than 300 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters, received his medical degree from the University of Illinois, completing his Internal Medicine residency at the University of Minnesota, where he also earned his Masters in Public Health degree in Epidemiology. Since 1987, Dr. Wilt has worked in General Medicine at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

Wilt has conducted research, particularly in synthesizing the evidence to provide clarity on several important issues. For example, he identified high-value diagnostic and treatment approaches for individuals with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); established a more targeted role for antiviral therapy in individuals with chronic Hepatitis B infection; and ascertained an absence of evidence to support routine screening for delirium in hospitalized adults.

Wilt's work has led to the development of national practice guidelines to implement high-value, cost-conscious healthcare, particularly in the area of screening. For example, his Prostate Cancer Intervention Versus Observation Trial (PIVOT), published as the lead article in the July 25, 2012 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, demonstrated the lack of benefit and increased harms associated with radical prostatectomy for many men with localized prostate cancer compared to observation.

Wilt is a member of the VA Preventive Medicine Advisory Committee and the American College of Physicians Clinical Guideline Committee and a former member of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

Thanks to his leadership in developing breast cancer screening recommendations that more carefully balance benefits against harms, an average-risk woman can now expect to substantially reduce diagnostic- and treatment-related harms while maintaining health benefits by delaying her first mammogram to age 50 rather than age 40.

Wilt plans to use the support provided by this award to bring together colleagues to develop a High-Value Care Center in Minnesota. The Center's mission will be to define, identify, communicate, and implement high-value healthcare to improve the lives of Veterans. A major focus will be on improving healthcare value by reducing the overuse of low-value care.

Landmark MVP study hits quarter-million enrollment mark

VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP) enrolled its 250,000th volunteer research participant in early March. A Korean War Veteran at the VA Loma Linda (Calif.) Healthcare System was the 250,000th person to sign up for the research program. Launched in 2011, MVP aims to create one of the world's largest databases of health and genetic information. Up to a million Veterans are expected to be enrolled in MVP by 2018. The goal is to better understand how genes affect health. Health information and genetic samples collected through MVP are stored securely and will be made available for studies by authorized researchers. The information is linked to Veterans' VA electronic health records, giving researchers more valuable data to study. Stringent safeguards are in place to protect Veterans' privacy. MVP data will help researchers study a wide range of health conditions—from chronic diseases such as diabetes and schizophrenia, to post-deployment concerns such as PTSD and traumatic brain injury. MVP is enrolling Veterans at nearly 50 VA medical centers nationwide. For more information, visit www.research.va.gov/MVP. Minneapolis VA is ranked #3 in enrollment with more than 7,000 participants.



MINNEAPOLIS VA 2013 CIVIL SERVANTS OF THE YEAR



Courtney Andrjeski completely reorganized and energized the Compensation and Pension Clinic. She increased staff morale. Her methods

brought all our metrics to the best levels since 2008. Ms. Andrjeski revamped our process for referrals to offsite clinical contractors. This allowed us to maintain our average processing days at new lows during 2013. She also led the first successful out- reach to incarcerated Veterans using TeleMentalHealth capability in C&P.



Mari Berglund is an extremely dedicated employee who on a daily basis far exceeds expectations. She is in charge of scheduling nuclear medicine services and

does this job with great empathy to our veterans. She handles complex scheduling issues insuring veterans are scheduled as soon as possible. She is very friendly and patients, staff and physicians are all impressed with her. Although her job is difficult and stressful, she is a delight to work with; she inspires the whole department.



John Holter continued his superb leadership of the VAMC's Microbiology Laboratory and introduced multiple new cutting-edge technologies, bringing

the laboratory into "the modern era. He enthusiastically welcomed visitors, giving them his full attention. As a result of Mr. Holter's service and leadership, the microbiology laboratory provides exceptional service to the clinical and educational mission and veteran patients benefit from first-rate microbiological laboratory support.



Keith Kivi is a Lead Property Technician, responsible for accountability of all IT equipment at Minneapolis VAHCS and Federal Building. Keith took it upon

himself to work out the details with IT staff at the Federal Building to migrate their data into our property management system so 100% accountability could be maintained. Keith has maintained this workload without complaint. Keith was also selected as the Lead Property Technician as he is always looking for new challenges and ways to assist all our customers.



Rita Jacobson is a dedicated VA employee as a Senior Technologist in the Hematology laboratory. Rita joined the VISN exploratory

committee for new instrumentation. In the absence of her manager who was on leave, Rita became the key person, the knowledge bank for everything surrounding inaugurating this state-of-the-art equipment. She went to off-site training, wrote new policies and procedures, trained the staff and troubleshoots extensively. The end result is optimal patient care.



Rebecca Indahl is certainly the most conscientious and dedicated clinic nurses. Her dedication is such that she often stays well past her shift completing phone

calls and staying on top of our patients' needs. She possesses a very cheerful nature and displays a great deal of patience and grace under pressure in the most difficult of situations. We have 100% confidence in her patient assessments and are always impressed by her clinical acumen.



Sheri Lechner is always checking with patients to make sure that all their questions have been answered and tries so hard to be as accommodating as possible. She is

known for her efforts of going above and beyond all expectations. Veterans know her to be very friendly, responsive and efficient. Sheri is welcoming and approachable and also great at creating a comfortable environment for our Veterans. Not only does she deliver warm blankets - she delivers a warm heart.



Rebecca Vogsland has demonstrated significant professional contributions to the field of Physical Therapy and the care provided for Veterans at both local and

national levels. These include: The development of the Minneapolis VAHCS Comprehensive Pain Program serving the entirety of VISN 23, appointment on national VA workgroups to improve Veteran's care, and service on the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine's Military/VA and Pain Management Advisory Task Forces. Rebecca is also serves as an active representative to national and state chapters of the APTA.



Beret Skroch genuinely defines and exemplifies what it means to be an outstanding Civil Servant. She is dedicated to building relationships within and across

disciplines, empowering and inspiring others to reach their full potential. Her work and leadership style reflect her belief that maintaining high ethical standards within a creative, collaborative and transparent work environment not only improves service quality and program performance, but also maximizes employee potential, fosters innovation and leads to greater success in meeting the VA vision, mission, and goals.



Sharon Skoblik has distinguished herself in so many ways. She is assigned as the administrative lead for the monumental project of opening a newly constructed inpatient ward. As the point person for the All Employee Survey she has worked tirelessly to structure, administer, tabulate, and distribute results for thousands of respondents. As the sole Administrative Assistant to two executive leaders, the Associate Director and the Nurse Executive, she has managed a variety of tasks, projects and time lines with outstanding capability.



Conrad Lyons has distinguished himself in the areas of leadership and superior professional performance as a nurse manager. He has instituted new purposeful hourly rounding practices to improve nursing care, established improved communication plans for physicians and nursing to enhance collaboration. He has developed plans for increased patient safety through the falls risk committee and redesign of patient care dining areas. In addition, Conrad's leadership has been critical in the provision of Veterans rehabilitation.



Ruth Malone is known to the Veterans as very friendly, responsive and efficient. Ruth is always checking with patients to make sure that all their questions have been answered and tries hard to be as accommodating as possible. She comes in on weekends to visit inpatients and prays with them on regular basis. She demonstrates daily what excellent customer service means. She's known to be the "go to" person of the Emergency Department. Ruth is a genuine caring person who delivers a warm heart to everyone.



Ted Steidl leads a large staff as Maintenance Supervisor. In-house projects completed include the critical Emergency Department renovations,

eliminating congestion in Patient Family Center, and Pain Center initiative. He has partnered with HR to improve recruiting/hiring, prepared training plans, and implemented staff feedback process. Ted has implemented a Lockout/Tagout process that became a VISN benchmark; his efforts have helped to achieve some of the lowest number of Life/Safety findings of any hospital during the 2013 Joint Commission inspection.



Linda Setterlund connects with every one of our patients, making them feel cared for and taken care of as their first point of contact. One of Linda's greatest assets is that she exudes care and concern, she knows, understands and listens to the needs of our patients and family members and works with them to ensure their appointments are scheduled timely and are convenient. Her sustained commitment to customer service excellence sets the highest standard when taking care of our nations veterans.



Denise Rogich has worked in the Pharmacy Department for 15 years. She is a preceptor for the VA Pharmacy Residency Program and for PharmD students during their VA rotations. Ward 3K nursing come to Denise for problem solving, including issues unrelated to pharmacy. She is highly regarded in the department as well as with attending inpatient cardiologists for her consistent superior knowledge and performance. This coupled with her ability to teach makes her a very valuable asset.

Milestones—Congratulations

35 Years

Horace Crowder
Acquisitions & Materials

30 Years

Suzanne Frederickson
Specialty Care

Amy Hingsberger
HR

25 Years

Willie Turner
Environmental Health

Scott Sorensen
Primary Care

Linda Van Egeren
Mental Health

20 Years

Jane Dirnberger
Specialty Care

Colleen Fiandaca
Primary Care

15 Years

Kathleen Nelson
Primary Care

Sylvia Williams
Primary Care

Maureen Oshea
Primary Care

Jessica Burch
Environmental Health

Jonathan Arnold
Education

Dan Tarro
IT

Robert Burch
Environmental Health

Bagrat Amirikian
Research

Kathryn Nelson
Primary Care

Marcia Parker
Imaging

Joseph Steiner
Environmental Health

10 Years

Denise Elliott
Mental Health

Natalie McKinley
Mental Health

Carla Drumbeater
Primary Care

Shawn Bury
Primary Care

Margaret Ell
Primary Care

Carly Lamers
HR

VA NEWSMAKERS

Two staffers from the U.S. Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) visited the Minneapolis VA Medical Center on April 14. They were briefed on numerous topics. The executive team of Director **Patrick Kelly**, Associate Director **Erik Stalhandske**, Chief of Staff **Kent Crossley, MD**, and Nurse Executive **Helen Pearlman** gave a general overview. **Peter Marshall, MD**, and **Cynthia Townsend, PhD**, described the chronic pain program and opioid safety initiative. **Melissa Polusny, PhD**, discussed the VA collaboration with the Minnesota National Guard on studies of soldiers and their families. PMR chief **Mike Armstrong, MD**, and his staff provided an overview of the polytrauma rehabilitation center. Staff included: **Mike Reckard**, caregiver support coordinator, administrator **Jack Avery**, social worker **Stacy Tepper**, OEF/OIF manager **Mark Frenzel**, psychologists **Rose Collins, PhD**, and **Maureen Kennedy, PhD**, and physician **Mary Himmler, MD**. Marines' Regional Care Coordinator **Roger Rands**, and Marine military liaisons **SSgt Roger Lemons** and **Gunnery Sgt Alan Mansager** also participated in a discussion of the military to VA transition. The SVAC aides toured the 4J inpatient unit and the Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Program (PTRP) after the briefing.

Aasma Shaukat, MD, gastroenterologist and clinical researcher, was recognized by Preventing Colorectal Cancer as one of the 2014 Champions of Colorectal Cancer Prevention. The organization said, "**Dr. Shaukat is** a dedicated clinical researcher and advocate for colon cancer screening and prevention with an excellent track record. Recognized as a national and international leader in the field, she continues to make significant contributions to colon cancer prevention efforts through her compassionate approach, enthusiasm and innovative research."

Father Damien Schill, chief of chaplain service, authored "Spiritual Pastoral Ministry" in the Spring 2014 issue of "Salute," the magazine of the archdiocese for the military service. In the article, Father Damien described the program where seminarians are assigned to the VA for two months each summer.

Researcher **Dr. Akhouri Sinha** was interviewed by Minnesota Broadcasters on a study of prostate nodes. The interview will air during the weekend of April 19 at www.accessminnesotaonline.com/2014/04/16/1486.

Infectious disease researcher **James Johnson, MD**, was quoted in an April 17 Reuters News Service story on the source of drug-resistant bacteria in kitchens. A European study found that cutting boards were contaminated with drug resistant bacteria. Johnson, who was not involved in the study, commented that the finding was troubling but not surprising.



Staff members of the Minneapolis VA's new evidence-based nursing unit (3E) review their actions following an emergency evacuation exercise of the unit on April 3 with Emergency Manager Jon Johnson (speaking) in photo above. At right, staffers learn to move a patient down the stairwell using emergency equipment.



NEWS FROM VACO



Survey: Veterans Very Satisfied with VA Care

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), an independent customer service survey, ranks the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) customer satisfaction among Veteran patients among the best in the nation and equal to or better than ratings for private sector hospitals. The 2013 ACSI report assessed satisfaction among Veterans who have recently been patients of VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) inpatient and outpatient services. In 2013, the overall ACSI satisfaction index for VA was 84 for inpatient care and 82 for outpatient

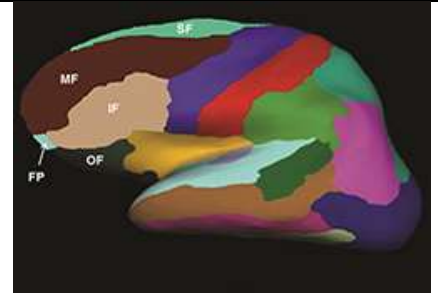
care, which compares favorably with the U.S. hospital industry (scores of 80 and 83, respectively). Since 2004, the ACSI survey has consistently shown that Veterans give VA hospitals and clinics a higher customer satisfaction score, on average, than patients give private sector hospitals. These overall scores are based on specific feedback on customer expectations, perceived value and quality, responsiveness to customer complaints, and customer loyalty. One signature finding for 2013 is the continuing high degree of loyalty to VA among Veterans, with a score of 93 percent favorable.

VA Removes Annual Income Reporting Requirement

The VA is eliminating the annual requirement for most Veterans enrolled in VA's health care system to report income information beginning in March 2014. Instead, VA will automatically match income information obtained from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration. Some Veterans applying for enrollment for the first time are still required to submit income information. There is no change in VA's long-standing policy to provide no-cost care to indigent Veterans, Veterans with catastrophic medical conditions, Veterans with a disability rating of 50 percent or higher, or for conditions that are officially rated as "service-connected." VA encourages Veterans to continue to use the health benefits renewal form to report changes in their personal information, such as address, phone numbers, dependents, next of kin, income and health insurance. For more information, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost or call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

Women Veterans Using Maternity Benefits at Increasing Rate

Call it a new baby boom. Today's Veterans are more likely to be women than at any time in U.S. history. They're deciding to start families, to the tune of more than 10,000 infants in five years. In fact, the 2,730 deliveries in 2012 represented a 44 percent increase over 2008. VA has provided maternity benefits to women Veterans since 1996, but the system wasn't perfect. While a Veteran's delivery expense was covered, the actual infant was not, even during the first few days of life. In 2010, VA instituted a policy change expanding care for the infant's first seven days of life. Mattocks designed a retrospective study to examine delivery trends over a five-year period. She and her colleagues published the results in the January - February 2014 edition of *Women's Health Issues*. From 2008 to 2012, more than 300,000 women received health care through VA. Of those, 9,225 Veterans had inpatient births, typically at non-VA facilities, with VA paying the cost. Over five years, VA paid for the births of 10,235 babies.



The graphic shows the brain regions that were examined in study of Gulf War Veterans and the link between their sleep quality and brain volume.

Poor Sleep Tied to Reduced Brain Volume in Gulf War Study

In a study of 144 Gulf War Veterans, those with the poorest sleep scores showed lower brain volume on MRI scans. The study appeared in the March 1, 2014, issue of the journal *Sleep*.

Past studies have linked poor sleep to reduced volume in certain areas of the brain—namely parts of the frontal lobes, in the cerebral cortex—but the new findings show more extensive changes.

"The surprising thing about this study is that it suggests poor sleep quality is associated with reduced gray matter volume throughout the entire frontal lobe and also globally in the brain," lead researcher Dr. Linda Chao told a website.

Gray matter is made up mainly of neurons, the most important type of brain cell. White matter, in contrast, is made up of axons, the long, thin fibers that extend from neurons and relay messages.

Chao is with the Center for Imaging of Neurodegenerative Diseases, based at the San Francisco VA Medical Center and UCSF.



Albert Lea VA Clinic Grand Opening!

Friday, April 25, 2014
1-4 pm

Program begins at 1pm, followed by open house and tours.

Location: Skyline Mall, 1665 West Main Street Albert Lea, MN

All Veterans and members of the general public are invited.

Light refreshments will be served.

The Minneapolis VA's newest community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) will be managed by Valor Healthcare, Inc. (Humana Government Business).

CLINIC OPENED TO PATIENTS STARTING APRIL 2, 2014



The walks will be scheduled 7-8am, 11-1300 and 1700-1800, to accommodate all shifts. A Wellness Fair will be held in the 2nd floor flag atrium of the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis.

Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, in partnership with the law firm of Fredrikson & Byron, P.A., invites you to participate in a free:

DROP-IN LEGAL CLINIC FOR VETERANS

CHILD SUPPORT & FAMILY, EMPLOYMENT, BENEFITS, EXPUNGEMENT, DEBT COLLECTION, WILLS

Tuesday, May 13, 2014 9am - 2pm | VA Medical Center

Flag Atrium Balcony Room 25 114 (ask information desk for directions)

1 Veterans Drive | Minneapolis, MN

FREE Parking at the VA Medical Center

Attorneys, MACV staff, County Veterans Service Officers, and child support officers will be available throughout the day to assist veterans with questions, legal forms and counsel.

For more information contact:

Sara Sommarstrom, MACV - 651.224.0292 | ssommarstrom@mac-v.o

Disclaimer: VA assumes no responsibility for the attorneys providing services at this clinic.

This referral does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by VA.